

# Interesting Chat and Stage Gossip for Playgoers

## June Mathis, Who Adapted "The Four Horsemen" for the Screen, Is Tireless Worker

This is an excerpt from a letter written from the Coast to Leonore Coffey, former scenario writer for Clara Kimball Young: "It may interest you to know that yesterday morning while at the Metro here, Miss Mathis, being terribly rushed, invited me to sit through a film with her in the projection room. We went in and we saw the titles were by you. My fidelity was completely conquered. And I told her about you. And she liked your work. And the picture was 'The Little Fool,' the 'Little Lady of the Big House,' by Jack London. And we exclaimed over the exquisite photography. And everything. 'There is one bit, however, that I think she'll change and you'll probably hear from her about it. It has to do with the caption: 'Paula could not understand what kept Dick and Evan from the party that night' (or similar), and then the action that was flashed immediately after that was the two men talking by the fire. Of course, to us in the projection room, what was signified was obvious, but Miss Mathis said it was not necessary to bring in the name of Paula at all. 'She is a wonderful woman, one is privileged to be associated in work with her. With the five or six scenarios she has to tell over at once, she still has time for her kind word for everybody and her accessibility to help others. I don't believe there is another person in the field to-day who has been a continuity scribe, because here is the climactic sense and the emphatic one. She's apt to say aloud: 'We've sat through a reel and a half—how much of the story has been told?' One can waste neither words, time nor money with her."

The day the letter was posted an assignment came to "write about Miss Mathis." Only one column, though, and a biographical volume could easily be compiled. To briefly brush across her career, however, it is to be said that the expert who managed the mammoth job of adapting the Blasco Ibañez novel to the screen, the result of which is shown at the Lyric Theater to-night, was once the leading lady for "Brewster's Millions," and the mischievous subterfuge in Julius Klingens' "The Fascinating Widow." She comes from the West, was a stage child, played musical comedy, and was the inimitable negro in the best performance given by Dorothy Donnelly of "Grannie Maun." Miss Mathis says: "I could never endure the hardship of treading the boards again, but I would not relinquish the opportunity of having done it for anything. Doubtless, it was experience that, every day, unconsciously helps me in the work I am doing now."

As Booth Tarkington will be remembered for Penrod, Mark Twain for Huck Finn and Victor Hugo for Jean Valjean, so will Miss Mathis be remembered for "The Four Horsemen." She was the first to adapt the novel to the screen, and her duty done when "final clinical" had been typed on the last page of her manuscript. With Rex Ingram as co-producer, in casting Rudolf Valentino as Julio, Albee Terrell as Mariquerite, Pomeroy Cannon as Madrigale, Joseph Swickard as Desnoyers pere, Alan Hale as Karl von Hartrott, and the dozen other memorably vivid characters—the choice of these life-size traits in itself, being an achievement. She also helped design the sets and suggest the costumes. And every day and night that the picture was gaining footage in the camera, Miss Mathis could be found on the set absorbed in their work or advising her co-craftsmen.

Motion picture production is having a basic elevating effect on the drama, and literature, according to Hugh Ford, the Paramount director, who recently returned from England, where he opened the new London studio for the Famous Players-Lasky Corporation. "There has been a lot of talk about the motion picture debasing the drama and literature," said Mr. Ford, "but a close analysis of the situation will show the opposite. The motion picture is having the same effect on the drama that the short story has had on literature. It is raising the public's interest more critical and more discerning. "The motion picture is increasing the audience of the drama. It has led the way to the day when the worth-while things get the attention they deserve. 'The Miracle Man' was a good book, and a good play, but how many people knew it until the picture was made? 'The Hunchback of Notre Dame' and 'The Child' was a fine piece of fiction writing, but not until it was produced as a picture in 'Broken Blossoms' did many people know there was such a story. 'The Hunchback' was a good story, but not until it was visualized to the public in a picture did its possibilities become fully recognized by the greater mass of our population. "With the increasing popularity of the films by such writers as Sir Gilbert Kipling, Sir M. M. Barrie, Edward Knoblock, and Henry Arthur Jones, Mr. Ford explained, the motion picture has taken rapid strides toward its proper place in the sphere of literature, drama and stage."

## Motion Pictures Will Elevate Literature and Drama, Says Hugh Ford

Willard Mack's new dramatic school, when opened at the Lexington Theater, will provide special advantages for the advancement of members of the chorus. The author-actor sees no reason why any ambitious girl or boy should remain long in the ranks of the chorus and proposes to teach them not only the art of acting, but how to become competent stage managers, directors and electrical experts. Quite frequently there is literary ability hidden in the rows of the chorus, and Mack expects to recruit some of these embryonic authors and direct them in the knack of writing successful plays. The new school will be open only for members of the theatrical profession, as it is Mack's hope by means of education, to reduce the large number of actors and actresses who are now haunting managers' offices for engagements to act when these positions are very scarce. With a knowledge of other departments of the theater, Mack figures that this number could be materially reduced, as there are always jobs for capable hands in the mechanical lines of a Broadway show. The originator of the new idea has had many years' intimate connection with the stage as author, actor and producer. Mack broke all speed records when he wrote and staged the produced "Smooth as Silk," his latest play, which was danced by Alexander Oumansky, ballet master, and Gladys Wade and Doris Miller. In the interim in Gouverneur Morris's "A Tale of Two Worlds," Elizabeth Ayres will sing the Ming Tzu song from "East Is West."

## Music at the Capitol

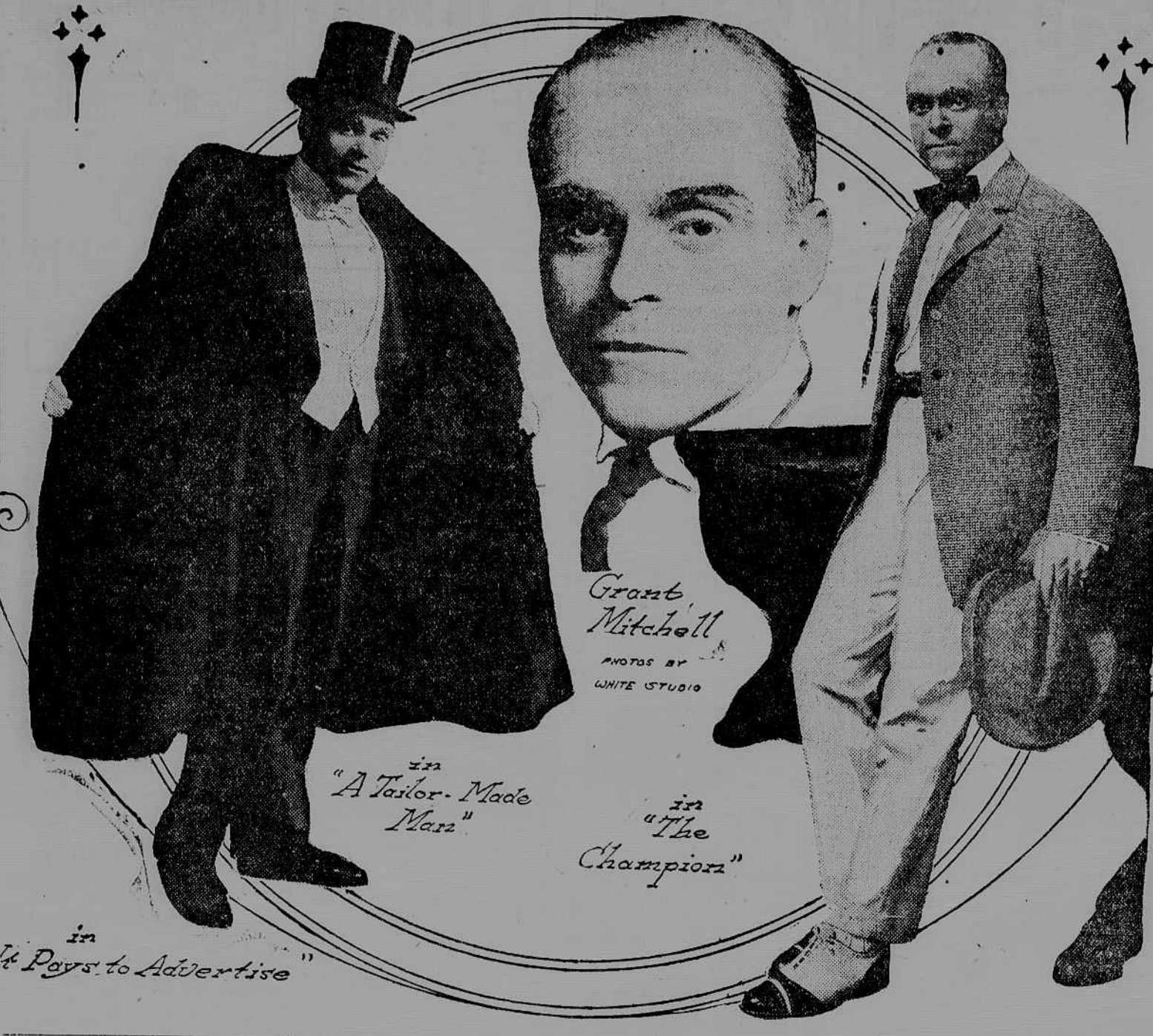
A variety of musical numbers are on the program prepared by S. L. Roth at the Capitol Theater next week. The Capitol Grand Orchestra, under Erno Rappe, plays Victor Herbert's "Irish Rhapsody" as an overture. Jacques Gordan will play Kreisler's "Lambourne Chinois," Mlle. Gambalini will sing "The Swan," "Nola," a silhouette, will be danced by Alexander Oumansky, ballet master, and Gladys Wade and Doris Miller. In the interim in Gouverneur Morris's "A Tale of Two Worlds," Elizabeth Ayres will sing the Ming Tzu song from "East Is West."

## "Mu Lan" to Help China Fund

"Mu Lan" will be the featured play of the Century Roof, starting at 8:15 in the evening. The proceeds will be turned into the famine relief fund for China. "Mu Lan" is the story of a Chinese girl who, in the year of the sixth century and was rendered into the English from the drama written by Peng Chun Chang, former president of Nankai College. Miss Eva Leewah is starred in this drama.

## Easter at the Rivoli

Hugo Riesenfeld's Easter production at the Rivoli will be a comedy festival for children in which Charlie Chaplin will demonstrate the rabbit defense. "Snooky" will be on the program. An Easter pantomime is announced, composed of Paul Oskar, Vera Meyers and assistant dancers.



## The Evolution of a Star Grant Mitchell

Grant Mitchell, who is now appearing in "The Champion," a Sam H. Harris production at the Longacre Theater, did not indulge in youthful dreams of a stage career. His early record reveals no juvenile appearance and no undue predilection for the theater. When he finished high school he went to Yale, where he took the regulation four years of academic work. Then he selected the practice of law as the medium for releasing his talents and accordingly studied law at Harvard. After graduation he was admitted to the bar and opened a modest law office in Columbus, Ohio. It is no reflection on Mr. Mitchell's ability to record that his office was not besieged with clients during the three years he practiced, or expressed his willingness to practice, law; just ask any successful lawyer about his first years. But suffice it to say that Mr. Mitchell had much time for reflection and introspection. He could take a trip to New York occasionally without the inconvenience of being obliged to hustle back to Columbus to look after his clients. It was while he was in New York that he attended the theater that he thought came to him that a life spent in litigation would not be nearly so much to his taste as a life devoted to the stage. The quickness with which he turned to the theater was a matter of methods of livelihood gave a pleasant little jolt to his friends in New York and Columbus. He promptly went back to Columbus, disposed of his law library, sold his desk and the chairs that the clients so seldom used, wound up his affairs and returned to New York. He took a course in training in the New York Academy of Dramatic Art, from which he later graduated. With an unusual educational equipment and an assortment of degrees and diplomas that might well be envied, he began at the bottom of the theatrical ladder in the manner approved by so many copybook texts. He made his debut as a spear carrier in Richard Mansfield's production of "Julius Caesar." His next engagement was with the late Clara Ooolopod in "The Girl With the Green Eyes." This was followed by two seasons with Francis Wilson in "Cousin Billy" and "The Mountain Climber." A tour with Lillian Russell in "The Butterfly" and another with Maxine Elliott in "Myself, Bettina," were next in order. In "The Call of the North" with Robert Edson, Mr. Mitchell played the role of the Rev. Archibald Crane, and the following year he went back to Miss Elliott and toured in "The Chaperon."

## High Theater Prices Find an Advocate In Arnold Bennett

The financial chart of the theater in England exhibits a disheartening downward curve, according to Arnold Bennett, who does the office of analyst for The London Daily Express. In a recent issue of that journal he says: "More lies, polite lies, are told about the theater than about any other subject on earth. Only dramatists are excepted from the rose-colored conspiracy, and even dramatists, when they have had twenty years' success without once producing anything to upset ancient sentimental ideas, seldom hear the truth about themselves in the popular press. As for managers and actors, they are incapable of doing wrong. If they fail, the fault is always the fault of the public, or the fault of the author, or the fault of the movies, or the fault of ill luck, or—most important—the fault of the financial situation. "The financial situation of theaters is difficult, but not more difficult than that of other industries. Theater rents have enormously risen, but so have business rents. "Theatrical accommodation is far too limited, but so is business accommodation. The notion that the theater is being ruined by a gang of sinister bloodsuckers who lurk mysteriously behind the stage strikes me as abundantly comic. In other industries, the manufacturer who produces a commodity in manufacturing costs, 100 or 200 per cent in the retail price, is not a manufacturer would dream of parting with his goods to the public at the old prices. And the theater represents a bargain sale to which the public is invited not for one week in January but all the year round. Theatrical managers are manufacturers. When it comes to the theater, they are subject to the same laws, and not living under a regime of heavenly miracles, then the financial situation will begin to look up. "I shall be the first to kindly disclaim—that I do not know what the future can furnish the final answer. And the answer will be the answer which the future will furnish, which is dictated with certainty. The price of theater seats will go up—unless the old axioms that two and two make four and that a pint cannot pour two casks to be true. "Some one will write to say that theater seats are a luxury. Well, they are. But the price of every other luxury has gone up. Even the price of books has gone up. True, the book market is depressed, but not more so than the rubber market, or the cigar market, or the hotel market, or the boat market. "Theatrical managers have combined, not without success, against actors and actresses, against authors and against stage hands. "Why should they not combine against the public? Everybody else has done it constantly with brilliant success. Newspaper proprietors have done it to perfection. Tobacco manufacturers do it. All other manufacturers do it. And they do it because they know that the public is a very human monster afflicted with the vice of never paying more than it is compelled to pay. "If the public can amuse itself while sending theatrical managers to ruin, it will assuredly do so, for it has no conscience, but a hard common sense. The public will hear only what it wants to hear, and it will pay for it. The theater ought to be able to pay its way, and formerly could pay its way when the weekly receipts amounted to half the weekly operating capacity, and that this is no longer by any means true. Its laughter at a light comedy will be quite untimely by melancholy at this gloomy information. The public is heartless, and will yield only to force, but to force it will yield. "Why, then, do managers continue to hope that two and two will soon make three? Because they are afraid of facts, and because they lack faith in their own wares—in the mighty attraction of the stage."

## Riches and Poverty Are Again Made the Motif of Strong Drama of Screen

There is a sadness about New York's slums which even the lightest heart can't deny, and the potency of poverty and squalor is the keener when contrasted with the blazing lights of a fashionable thoroughfare. But to present both the pitiable poor and the squalid life of Broadway without making the humble scenes appear mawkish and stagey is a problem which puts the modern motion picture to the test. "Humoresque" was one of the human side of the poor, and it became a screen classic because of it. "The Plaything of Broadway," the Reelart picture in which Justine Johnston, a debutante, her Broadway screen debut, promised to repeat the success of "Humoresque" in its sympathetic portrayal of the slum scenes. The picture will be the principal screen feature of the program of the Rialto Theater during the week beginning Sunday, March 13. The East Side slums are not used for purposes of contrast in "The Plaything of Broadway." It is the helplessness of the poor which is the theme, and some dancer from Broadway into an angel of mercy. It was not the slums which drew her to its confines, but a daring wager by which she could win a baby doctor away from his work and make him one of the coteries which followed her fast pace in the Thirty Club. The East Side, with its dingy rooms, narrow hallways and littered fire-escapes, is in sharp contrast with the sumptuous clubroom and boudoir settings showing the gay world in which Lola, the character portrayed by Miss Johnston, lives. Her selfish and dazzling life. It was at the Thirty Club that the statement that all men except one were unable to resist her charm gave her the idea to humble the young doctor, so as to be always near her victim, but unconsciously, came under the spell of kindness and self-sacrifice. The glamour of night life faded from her vision, and when members of the Thirty Club sought to induce her to return and threatened to reveal her original purpose of winning the doctor away from his work a gripping complication ensued.

## Morris by the Mile

"The Hangman," by Gouverneur Morris, is the tentative title of his fourth original scenario, now held by Goldwyn but not yet released. "A Tale of Two Worlds," by Morris, has been completed, and is promised for showing at the Capitol Theater, beginning today. "The Purple Heart" and "The Age of Hearts," both by Morris, are in process of screen production.

## Marjorie Daw in "Experience"

Under the direction of George Fitzmaurice, Marjorie Daw will appear in a picture version of "Experience" in the role of Love, Richard Barthelmé will be seen as Youth in this coming Paramount offering.

## Study Craftsmanship Says Miss Macpherson to Writers Of Motion Picture Stories

Success in scenario writing is a matter of craftsmanship rather than genius, of hard work rather than inspiration, according to Jeanie Macpherson, who is responsible for the script in Cecil De Mille's most successful production, "The Sign of the Cross." She is one of the highest paid scenario writers in the country. This week she is at the Hotel Chatham on her way to Europe, where she will do research work in Germany, take a course in flying in England and buy clothes in Paris. She has just finished "The Affairs of Anatole," which she says is the biggest job she ever tackled. It is an all-star picture, with Wallace Reid, Elliott Dexter, Wanda Hawley, Gloria Swanson and Rebe Daniels—in fact, the entire De Mille constellation. "Miss Macpherson declined committing herself on the question of the best versus one-star productions. But she went so far as to say that she thinks the story is the main thing, regardless of the star."

"Mrs. De Mille never sacrifices a story for the sake of a star," she said. "He will not allow certain parts to be cut out of a picture because the girl playing the lead is not at her best in a close-up. If there were a big picture it should go over regardless of everything and everybody."

"Speaking of the period that has changed so much since I started in the business," Miss Macpherson said, "I had learned a great deal in the last year and that her contact with 'The Affairs of Anatole' had been a revelation. "Working on a story like this you feel as if you are ruling a kingdom composed of small duchies," she said. "The technique offered tremendous difficulties and I have now little I really knew about scenario writing. I had tried to handle it. I had no precedent to go by. And the public is galloping ahead so fast in what it desires that we are kept on our toes, trying to keep it. It's not so difficult to be successful in the first place, but it is extremely hard to keep up to the mark. There are fewer scenario writers in the field now than there were a year ago. I think this is the only department that has not suffered from the general slump in pictures."

Fresh from Hollywood, Miss Macpherson is keenly interested in the British writers who are studying scenario writing there. The directors are taking them in hand for the most part, she says, and none of them is better loved than Sir Gilbert Parker. They are all working hard and seriously. At the start some of the writers, who had already won their spurs in the literary world, were inclined to think that a scenario was something to be dashed off in the course of an afternoon. They were speedily disillusioned on this score. Mrs. Elliott Glynn is working night and day on her first picture. "Asked what the professional scenario writers thought about the literary invasion at Hollywood, Miss Macpherson said: "We are more than glad to welcome them. It stands to reason that authors who have given their life's blood to story telling have ideas to get across that have something in them. A craftsman like Parker may not know his medium fully yet, but he has the gift of narration and is apt to have more integrity in his story than the average scenario writer. These authors may be short on picture technique, but they have an immense advantage in every other way, and it is up to the professional scenario writer to look to his laurels, although I really believe there is plenty of room for every one with real talent. "Scenario writing is no longer baby business. It is a technique is hard. Most of us feel that it is a pretty game and a game worth studying. Craftsmanship is immensely important. Any one with imagination can build up a story, but technique can only be acquired by grind."

Miss Macpherson pointed out that while it is true that authors and dramatists are entering freely into the scenario field, it is also true that none of the professional scenario writers are being invited to help playwrights in their work. She had an offer of this kind which she could not undertake because of her contract with Mr. De Mille.

## Doug Fairbanks Says Mission of Cinema Is To Make World Kin

What constitutes the perfect motion picture? Has it been made yet—has the ultimate in screen technique been achieved? Can further stupendous development of the cinema, the product of the lens, the story that is contained in a strip of celluloid and is shipped from theater to theater in a can, be looked for? Douglas Fairbanks, that whirlwind of the pictures, who appears at the Strand Theater beginning to-day in his latest, "The Nut," has a very definite idea of what constitutes the perfect motion picture. He sums up the requirements in the following words: "We want to know our neighbors the world over—that the great bulk of Russians, of Italians, of Chinese are perceiving that we are all human beings, that we have a common humanity, that we have a common pride in worthy achievement, are chagrined when they blunder, are sorry when they are deceived, jolly in their revelry, weep when they are sorrowful. We need to see the Chinese woman tender with a sick child to love, to see a baby in all countries; that the Chinese in China, the same in Cairo, Egypt, that it does in Rushville, Ind. And the method of teaching us these things is at our disposal. These are the things the screen can show us. This is the great mission of the cinema. "No tedious journeying by land and sea, no long waiting of a half a day for a strange language, no tipping in the cold bath of political economy. Just the plain, easy lessons of the two dimensional screen in the comfortable and safe of the cinema. "The cinema is a great teacher. For years we have been saying: 'Motion pictures can raise an army.' Motion pictures can elect a president. And we have been satisfied with saying it. It is time to do something, time that the great directors and the world known stars awake to their responsibility. "Let them carry their work into Russia, Italy, France. Let them make their pictures there. Let them take as many as they can to show Russians as they are in Russia, as they are in Spain, as they are here before taken to show Americans as they are in America. Let the American boy play in spirit costume. This picture will be directed by Tom Terriss, who recently joined Cosmopolitan productions. The production will be on a lavish scale.

## Benefit for Boys' Club At Hippodrome To-night To Be Gala Performance

The bill for the big benefit for the Boys' Club of New York, to be given to-night at the Hippodrome, reads like the roster of the whole theatrical profession, so widespread and so deep is the interest stimulated by this institution. The Boys' Club is located at 161 Avenue A and occupies an eight-story building. It began in 1876, in an old basement in which seven boys gathered. The club, with its rapidly growing membership of more than seven thousand, is the feature of the Gas House District, and is enlarging its activities as fast as its funds will permit. It is the one great agency that stands between the boy and the evils of the street. Among its alumni it numbers three judges, four aldermen, two Assemblymen, one Congressman and hundreds of successful professional and business men. The work that is now carried on includes classes of many sorts, all kinds of physical training and a summer camp. The club is supported by contributions and there is invariably a deficit on account of increasing demands for entrance. Hence this gala testimonial performance. One of the most interesting numbers on the program, to the youthful mind, will be the photographing of a scene by D. W. Griffith for his new picture, "Dream Street," on the stage of the Hippodrome, with all the movie equipment in full view. Others who will appear are Pavlova, "Old Bill," with a special message, Laurette Taylor, Spencer Charters and most every one else in town.

## Mrs. Moody's Synopsis Of "The Faith Healer"

One of the briefest synopses of a play with a tremendous theme is that which Mrs. William Vaughn Moody, widow of the American playwright, wrote of "The Faith Healer"—the play which is to be presented in film version at the Criterion Theater for an extended engagement, beginning Sunday, March 13. Mrs. Moody, in cooperation with Z. Wall Gorton and Milton Sills, wrote the scenario from which George Melford directed the production. Mrs. Moody's synopsis is less than a hundred words in length. "Michaelis, the faith healer, has dedicated his life to the spiritual mission of healing the sick. "He falls in love and believes he must renounce either his mission or his love. "Hesitating in his choice he seems to lose his healing power. To restore him to his power the girl he loves confesses to him that she is unworthy. "As a consequence of her remorse she perceives that his mission must intensify. This brings them both to an understanding that sin is love and enables him to resume his work. "Milton Sills plays the role of Michaelis, Mrs. Moody, who has the part of the girl, Rhoda. "The production will be on a lavish scale.

## Cosmopolitan Gets Lionel Barrymore

Lionel Barrymore will create the title role in "Boomerang Bill" for Cosmopolitan Productions. "Boomerang Bill" appeared in the Cosmopolitan Magazine, and is by the author of the "Booster Pluck" story. This picture will be directed by Tom Terriss, who recently joined Cosmopolitan productions. The production will be on a lavish scale.

## Club at the Hippodrome

The New York Caledonian Club announces a Scottish night at the Hippodrome April 3, at 8:15. There will be a demand of one hundred papers under the direction of Pipe Major Angus Fraser. Joseph Hislop, tenor of the Chicago Opera Company, will make his first appearance here in concert on this occasion.

## Buried Treasure at Broadway

"Buried Treasure," the Cosmopolitan production starring Marion Davies, closed its four weeks' extended engagement at the Criterion Theater yesterday and will open to-morrow at B. S. Moss's Broadway Theater.